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## INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### STATE ENTITIES AUTHORIZED AS CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

Chapters 355 and 356 of the Acts of 1999 established the Child Protection Citizen Review Panels. Creation of these panels enabled Maryland to comply with the 1996 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Acts (CAPTA). The Act required states to establish three volunteer citizen review panels in order to receive funding under the Child Abuse and Neglect Grants Program. The three entities authorized as Citizen Review Panels are:

- ✓ **The State Board of the Citizen Review Board for Children, formerly the Foster Care Review Board (CRBC, State Board).** Since 1978, CRBC has operated a citizen review system for children in out-of-home placement working to ensure their safety, well-being and opportunities to have a permanent home. Currently, CRBC has approximately 350 review board members who are appointed by the Governor. In addition, each local government has appointed a local citizen review panel for child protection. The review board members elect ten members who form the State Board along with one Gubernatorial appointee. The State Board sets policies for and monitors the activities of the local boards and panels. ***As a Child Protection Citizen Review Panel, the State Board's focus is on reviewing policies, procedures, and cases pertaining to reports of child abuse and neglect in which a finding of indicated was made.*** *Indicated* is a finding that there is credible evidence which has not been satisfactorily refuted that abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse did occur.
- ✓ **The State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, formerly the Governor's Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN, State Council).** SCCAN is composed of 23 members, of which 15 are appointed by the Governor. SCCAN has 3 committees including the Conference Committee, the Legislative Committee and the federal Children's Justice Act Committee, as well as several subcommittees. Through these committees, SCCAN engages in a range of activities related to the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect. ***As a Citizen Review Panel, SCCAN is interested in examining policies, procedures and cases pertaining to reports of child abuse and/or neglect that are screened out (not investigated), ruled out (finding that abuse and/or neglect did not occur), or unsubstantiated (finding that there is an insufficient amount of evidence to support a finding of either indicated or ruled out).***
- ✓ **The State Child Fatality Review Team (SCFRT, State Team).** The State Team is a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team composed of 25 members including 11 from the general public who are appointed by the Governor. ***As a Citizen Review Panel, SCFRT focuses on reviewing cases of unexpected child deaths through the activities of local review teams that are established in each jurisdiction.***

### FOCUS OF REPORT

This joint report summarizes the work of the State Board and the State Council for the calendar year 2002. The State Team will issue a separate report. Throughout the year, the State Board and the State Council engaged their members and the local panels in a variety of activities to assess the child protection system and to generate recommendations for system improvements. The results of these activities are documented within three formats:

- o Committee reports
- o Individual reviews of indicated cases of child abuse and/or neglect
- o Annual reports at the jurisdictional level

This report summarizes the key findings and recommendations generated from the above three processes.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS' HIGHLIGHTS**

- ✓ Evaluations from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect reinforce the need for continued education and training for doctors in identifying and treating child abuse and neglect as well as cross-disciplinary training for law enforcement, attorneys, social workers and other professionals in the field of child maltreatment.
- ✓ The State Council's Research subcommittee completed its evaluation of screening decisions and policies at local Departments of Social Services. The study was undertaken to explore the degree to which screening decisions were consistent with guidance provided by DHR State policies. Each of the 24 jurisdictions submitted copies of all referrals received during one month in 2001. In all 5,023 referrals were received by Child Protective Services during the one-month study period and 1,811 of these referrals were screened out (an average of 36%). The data analysis occurred in 2002, and the preliminary summary findings indicate that most of the time (82%), documentation suggests that the correct decisions were made. There were, however, significant differences between jurisdictions. DHR may want to provide technical assistance/training related to which cases should be accepted for investigations to ensure uniformity in decision-making. Also, DHR may want to provide guidance to local jurisdictions regarding proper documentation, as some of the reasons for disagreeing with screening decisions were due to incomplete documentation.
- ✓ In 2002, the federal Children's Justice Act Committee (CJAC) issued a Request for Proposals by which to award CJA funds. In November, a proposal review committee that included one CJAC representative evaluated 21 proposals received and made funding recommendations in the approximate amount of \$700,000, distribution of which will occur in 2003.
- ✓ The CRBC's Children's Legislative Action Committee, along with SCCAN's Legislative Committee, aggressively pursued many of the policy recommendations in last year's report

### **CASE REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS**

- ✓ Fourteen (14) Case Review Committees completed 38 case reviews. While the results of 38 reviews do not provide a representative sample and can not be generalized as an evaluation of the child protection system in Maryland, they do provide worthy snapshots from which future assessments and evaluations can be directed.
- ✓ The Case Review Committees evaluate five functions of the child protection system:
  - o Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
  - o Receiving and screening child abuse and neglect allegations
  - o Investigating and assessing child abuse and neglect allegations
  - o Responding to child abuse and neglect; and
  - o Supervision and Administration
- ✓ Each function has multiple criteria. An agency is considered to have performed effectively if it has taken necessary measures to satisfy the criteria and any other necessary measures needed to protect children.
- ✓ Following is a broad summary of the findings in each function. It should be noted that for some functions and criteria there was wide variation between jurisdictions.

- o **Reporting:** 84% effectiveness. The criteria with the least favorable effectiveness score was “Mandated reporters’ 180 written report was in the record”
- o **Receiving and Screening:** 87% effectiveness. The criteria with the least favorable effectiveness scores were “All individuals listed on reports screened for prior history” and “Prior history of maltreatment was considered.”
- o **Information Gathering:** 70% effectiveness. The criteria with the least favorable effectiveness scores were “Investigators made reasonable efforts to interview all parties” and “Resources available to assess maltreatment (e.g., trained medical specialist, psychologist).
- o **Safety Assessment:** 63% effectiveness. While none of the criteria received strongly favorable scores, the following received the least favorable effectiveness ratings: “All maltreatment issues addressed,” “Prior maltreatment issues considered,” and “Safety assessment/plan adequately addressed known threats.”
- o **Risk Assessment:** 74% effectiveness. The criteria “Investigator assessed for presence of domestic violence and substance abuse” received the least favorable effectiveness score.
- o **Finding:** 89% effectiveness.
- o **Supervision/Administration:** 62% effectiveness. The criteria “Investigator’s caseload consistent with CWLA or other applicable standards” received the least favorable effectiveness score.
- o **Service Planning:** 53% effectiveness. While none of the criteria received strongly favorable scores, the following received the least favorable effectiveness ratings: “Case closed only after maltreatment was addressed,” and “Timely services were offered to address child safety, prevent maltreatment re-occurrence, and promote family unity.”

## **2002 RECOMMENDATIONS**

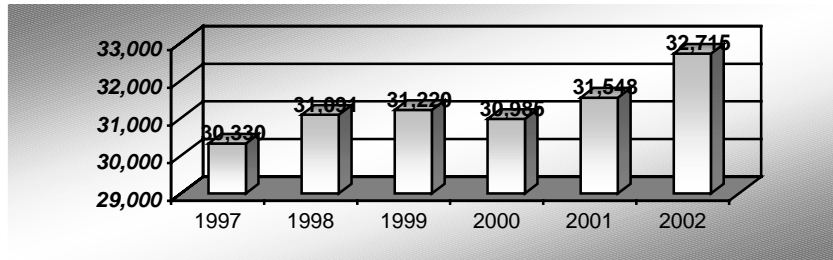
The following recommendations are based on the committee reports, case reviews and annual jurisdictional reports of the State Council and the State Board

- ✓ Strengthen Child Abuse and Neglect Laws and Policies
- ✓ Improve accountability regarding safety of children during reporting, investigation, and service delivery of the child protection process.
- ✓ Fully implement the Integration of Child Welfare and Substance Abuse Treatment Services (HB&SB671)
- ✓ Continue to implement the Child Welfare Workforce Act of 1998 in order to enhance casework quality, reduce staff turnover, and protect children.
- ✓ Develop quality assurance methods for child welfare services that incorporate long-term outcome measures.

## OVERVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE INVESTIGATIONS FOR MARYLAND DURING FISCAL YEAR 2002

There was a modest 8% increase (2,385) in the number of child protection investigations completed in FY02 as compared to FY97. Over a five-year period, the lowest number of investigations was conducted during FY97 and the highest number of investigations was conducted during FY02.

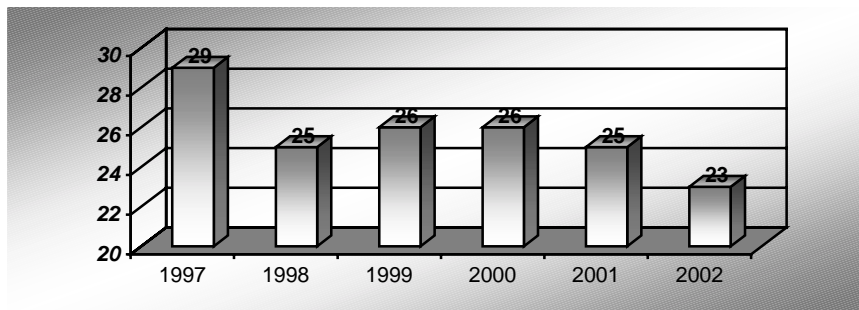
### NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS COMPLETED BETWEEN FY 97 - FY 02



Source: Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, Research Department

Between fiscal years 1997 and 2002, the percentage of indicated cases trended downward from a height of 29% in FY97 to a low of 23% in FY02.

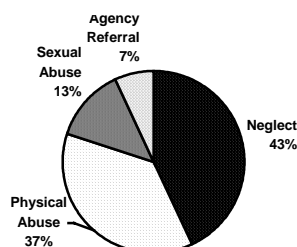
### PERCENTAGE OF CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS WITH FINDING OF INDICATED



Source: Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, Research Department

During FY 02, neglect slightly outpaced physical abuse as the most common type of allegation investigated.

### CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS DURING FISCAL YEAR 2002



Source: Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, Research Department

Twenty-eight percent of the neglect investigations resulted in a finding of indicated; as compared to 19% for physical abuse investigations, and 31% for sexual abuse investigations.

## OVERVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE INVESTIGATIONS BY JURISDICTIONS DURING FISCAL YEARS 1997 - 2002

Between 1997 and 2002, the average annual number of child protection investigations for each of the 24 jurisdictions ranged from 106 (Kent County) to 8,077 (Baltimore City). The rate of change in the number of investigations completed in 2002 as compared to 1997 also varied between jurisdictions from -19% (Baltimore City) to 143% (Somerset County).

### JURISDICTIONAL DATA ON CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS

| Jurisdictions  | Rate of change for number of investigations completed in 1997 as compared to 2002. | Rank in 5-year avg, Number of Invest. | Average Number of investigations Between 1997 and 2002 | Profile of year with Highest Number of Investigations Between 1997 and 2002 |                     |             | Profile of Year with Lowest Number of Investigations Between 1997 and 2002 |      |             |
|----------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|---------------------|-------------|--|------|-------------|
|                |  |                                       |  | #   | Year                | % Indicated | #  | Year | % Indicated |
| Allegany       | 17%  | 13                                    | 649  | 691   | <b>2002</b>         | 28%         | 583  | 1999 | 35%         |
| Anne Arundel   | -1%  | 4                                     | <b>2,772</b>   | 2,996   | 1997                | 17%         | 2,106  | 1999 | 21%         |
| Baltimore      | 5%   | 3                                     | <b>2,984</b>   | 3,366   | 1999                | 21%         | 2,807  | 1997 | 27%         |
| Calvert        | 27%  | 17                                    | 370  | 472   | <b>2002</b>         | 17%         | 272  | 1999 | 28%         |
| Caroline       | <b>92%</b>   | <b>20</b>                             | 251  | 358   | <b>2002</b>         | 21%         | 180  | 1998 | 29%         |
| Carroll        | 45%  | 14                                    | 626  | 783   | <b>2002</b>         | 23%         | 540  | 1997 | 20%         |
| Cecil          | -4%  | 11                                    | 765  | 849   | 1998                | 21%         | 696  | 2001 | 22%         |
| Charles        | 13%  | 10                                    | 815  | 937   | 1999                | 5%          | 754  | 1998 | 10%         |
| Dorchester     | 7%   | 19                                    | 293  | 397   | 1999                | 7%          | 216  | 1998 | 22%         |
| Frederick      | 25%  | 6                                     | 1,513  | 1,553   | 1998                | 13%         | 1,215  | 1999 | 13%         |
| Garrett        | 8%   | 23                                    | 163  | 208   | 2000                | 28%         | 89   | 1999 | 30%         |
| Harford        | 16%  | 8                                     | 1,207  | 1,284   | <b>2001</b>         | 19%         | 1,083  | 1999 | 21%         |
| Howard         | <b>61%</b>   | <b>9</b>                              | 893  | 965   | <b>2001</b>         | 28%         | 745  | 1999 | 27%         |
| Kent           | <b>60%</b>   | <b>24</b>                             | 106  | 139   | <b>2001</b>         | 16%         | 83   | 1999 | 18%         |
| Montgomery     | <b>64%</b>   | 5                                     | <b>2,449</b>   | 2,844   | <b>2001</b>         | 21%         | 1,619  | 1997 | 31%         |
| Pr. George's   | 5%   | 2                                     | <b>3,400</b>   | 3690  | 1998                | 34%         | 3,204  | 2000 | 32%         |
| Queen Anne's   | 48%  | 18                                    | 326  | 392   | 2000                | 10%         | 245  | 1997 | 11%         |
| St. Mary's     | 30%  | 16                                    | 546  | 603   | 1997                | 21%         | 425  | 2002 | 17%         |
| Somerset       | <b>143%</b>  | <b>21</b>                             | 241  | 310   | <b>2001</b>         | 22%         | 145  | 1997 | 36%         |
| Talbot         | 21%  | 22                                    | 234  | 242   | 1997                | 17%         | 190  | 1999 | 19%         |
| Washington     | 33%  | 7                                     | <b>1,505</b>   | 1,580   | 2000<br><b>2001</b> | 25%<br>25%  | 1,304  | 1997 | 23%         |
| Wicomico       | <b>82%</b>   | <b>12</b>                             | 736  | 954   | <b>2001</b>         | 22%         | 431  | 1998 | 47%         |
| Worcester      | 57%  | 15                                    | 395  | 486   | <b>2001</b>         | 26%         | 217  | 1998 | 36%         |
| Baltimore City | -19%   | 1                                     | <b>8,077</b>   | 9,186   | 1999                | 34%         | 7205   | 2001 | 36%         |
| State-wide     | -8%  |                                       | 31,315   | 30,985  | 2000                | 26%         | 30,330   | 1997 | 29%         |

Source: Department of Human Resources, Social Services Administration, Research Department

- ◆ Column 2 shows four of the six jurisdictions that experienced the most growth in child protection investigations (percentage in bold) are along the Eastern Shore (Caroline, Dorchester, Somerset, and Wicomico). Jointly, the six jurisdictions conducted an average of 15% of the investigations between 1997 and 2002.
- ◆ From Column 4, one can calculate that the 6 largest jurisdictions conducted an average of 68% of the investigations. Of the six jurisdictions, Baltimore City

experienced the most significant decline in the number of investigations and Montgomery County documented the most growth.

## **STATE COUNCIL ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The 1999 General Assembly passed legislation codifying the Governor's Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and renaming it the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN). SCCAN is composed of 23 members—legislators, State agencies or associations designate eight members and the Governor appoints fifteen.

SCCAN meets monthly to carry out the duties and responsibilities defined by State and federal law, including the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). SCCAN has three mandated committees and several subcommittees. Through the Conference, Legislative and federal Children's Justice Act committees, SCCAN engages in a range of activities related to the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

### **SCCAN's CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES DURING 2002**

#### **CONFERENCE COMMITTEE**

The Conference Planning Committee plans the Annual Governor's Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, which is designed to be the best practices mechanism for multidisciplinary training across Maryland. The committee consists of professionals and advocates in the field of child maltreatment.

The Governor's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference—*Designing the Future: Promising Strategies for Strengthening Families & Keeping Children Safe*—took place on April 25 & 26, 2002 at the Baltimore Convention Center. Out of a need for more focus on prevention activities, the Planning Committee decided to host the first two-day conference. The focus of day one was prevention programs, activities and research. The focus of day two was intervention and treatment programs, activities and research.

In response to requests for more intensive skill-based sessions, both 1.5-hour workshops and 3-hour skill seminars were offered. Fifty-three workshops were spread across the two days. Thirteen skill seminars occurred, including some geared toward reviewers on Local Citizen Review Panels and Healthy Families personnel. Additionally, a separate Medical Track was offered with Advanced and Basic sessions. Over 680 people attended the conference, including 145 presenters and 21 Medical track participants. Over 70 people registered through the State Citizens' Review Board for Children to attend the workshops and seminars geared toward citizen reviewers.

#### **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

The Legislative Committee is responsible for reviewing, researching, analyzing and making recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly regarding legislative proposals relevant to child abuse and neglect. During the 2002 General Assembly session, the Committee, through testimony, collaboration with child welfare advocates, and other advocacy activities, supported legislation that would:

- provide a criminal penalty for failing to report child abuse and neglect;
- protect children from individuals who use the Internet to communicate with minors for purposes of sexual contact;

- repeal restrictive provisions in Maryland's child hearsay statute;
- allow prosecutors to charge certain sexual offenses as a continuous course of sexual conduct when a child victim cannot specifically identify the dates of the offenses;
- add a member of the Council to the Criminal Justice Information System Advisory Board;
- permit child abuse charges to be brought against school employees and others in positions of authority over minors who molest children when they are off work;
- require the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Juvenile Justice to study the links between the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system;
- increase penalties for child maltreatment, a move that would have deterred cases of child abuse and neglect as well as child homicides;
- delete a religious exemption that would have precluded the state from intervening to protect certain children from religiously motivated medical neglect during a biological, chemical, or nuclear attack;
- expand the rape shield law to include child victims of sexual abuse;
- enhance the identification and protection of drug exposed newborns at risk of abuse or neglect;
- establish a children's ombudsman office that would address complaints related to government services for children;
- permit certain mothers to abandon their newborns without fear of prosecution, although the Council noted the many weaknesses in this legislation;
- amend the training of juvenile justice personnel to strengthen skills in recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect; and
- add the crime of child sexual abuse to the list of crimes of violence for which certain penalties would be enhanced for specified offenders.

The Committee opposed proposals that:

- weaken criminal histories records checks on individuals who have access to, or work with children;
- conflict with Maryland's child abuse and neglect reporting law; and
- require that standard operating procedures for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse include the videotaping of every interview with the child, but not their alleged abusers because child abuse is not listed as a crime of violence.



### **CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT COMMITTEE**

The Children's Justice Act Committee (CJAC) was reconstituted in January of 2000 as required by Maryland statute and to be in compliance with federal CAPTA law. The committee is multi-disciplinary comprised of representatives from the following disciplines and/or entities: law enforcement; judges and attorneys involved in both civil and criminal child abuse/neglect proceedings, prosecution and defense; child advocates, including attorneys from the legal aid and private practice sectors, CASA (court appointed special advocates) and advocates for children with disabilities; health and mental health professionals; child protective services; parent groups; children's advocacy centers; Maryland's child abuse and neglect Court Improvement Committee; and child fatality investigation and review.

The purpose of the task force is to examine the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases, with an emphasis on child sexual abuse. The following activities were undertaken during 2002 to help prepare for the triennial review due in 2003:

- In January, the members of CJAC were provided an in-depth presentation on the effects of traumatic stress on care providers and child welfare service professionals.
- In March, the CJAC co-chairs attended the national CJA grantees meeting in Washington, DC.
- At its March meeting, the committee members heard a presentation from representatives of the American Prosecutors Research Institute on a forensic interviewing program entitled "Finding Words." This is a developmentally appropriate forensic interviewing training program that the committee decided to bring to Maryland (for more information, see below). Also in March, SCCAN's Chair asked CJAC to undertake a statewide law enforcement system review related to child abuse/neglect investigations.
- In April, a three-hour skill seminar on multidisciplinary approaches to child abuse investigation and prosecution was sponsored at the Governor's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. The speakers were: Martha Finnegan, MSW, FBI's Innocent Images Program; Detective Mark Wrisley, Child Abuse Division, Escondido Police Department, San Diego, CA; and Laura Rogers, Senior Attorney, National Center on the Prosecution of Child Abuse.
- In May, the committee received a presentation on the use of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) in child sexual abuse investigations. Dr. Diane McDonald, medical director of the pediatric emergency room at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, Maryland and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Child Maltreatment Committee provided the presentation.
- In August 2002, the State issued a Request for Proposals by which to award CJA funds. In September, the committee co-chairs attended the public bidders conference for this RFP. Also in September, the committee submitted a formal

- application to participate in the Finding Words program and was selected as a forthcoming (Fall 2003) participant.
- In November 2002 a proposal review committee met (including one of the Task Force chairs) to evaluate the 21 proposals for CJA funds that had been submitted and to make funding recommendations. Fund allocation in the amount of approximately \$700,000 will occur in early 2003.

## **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

### **Exploring CPS Screening Practices in Maryland**

As an effort to explore the degree to which screening practices and decisions are consistent with state policies (DHR, 1996), a collaborative evaluation was undertaken by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Social Services Administration (SSA), the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN), and the University of Maryland Center for Families (UMCFF).

Deciding which referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies are appropriate and should therefore be evaluated is one of the most difficult decisions made by CPS agencies. "The appropriateness of this decision depends on the ability of the worker to elicit critical and accurate information and to apply law and policy to the information gathered" (Well, 2000, p. 3). Prior research on screening decision-making has suggested that many factors affect the decision to accept or not accept the referral as a report of child abuse or neglect that must be investigated (Wells, Fluke, and Brown, 1995). Factors that affect this decision range from differences in referral information, to differences in the training and expertise of workers, to jurisdictional differences in interpreting laws and policies.

### **EVALUATION METHODS**

Each of the 24 local Maryland jurisdictions were asked to submit copies of all referrals received in their jurisdiction during one month in 2001. Twenty-three jurisdictions submitted copies of their screened out referrals for May 2001 and Baltimore City Department of Social Services submitted all screened out referrals for November 2001. Data regarding the number of investigated CPS reports each jurisdiction received during those same months were also collected from the statewide Client Information System (CIS). In all, 5,023 referrals were received by CPS agencies during the one-month study period and 1,811 referrals were screened out (an average of 36%).

A coding system was designed to record information about the nature and extent of all referral information, demographic information about the child, information about the referral source, the type of suspected maltreatment (if specified), the result of the history clearance, the basis for the screened out decision, whether the situation was referred for other services, whether there was documentation that the supervisor and/or a panel was involved in the screening decision, and whether the review panel concurred with the screening decision. The case review protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of Maryland, Baltimore Institutional Review Board.

A collaborative review team was developed with policy analysts from SSA and researchers from the UMCFF. Most review team members were social workers, one member was a pediatrician, and one member was a lawyer. Review criteria guided

coding decisions. At least two team members reviewed cases at the same time and team discussions were held regarding any case in which the individual coder was uncertain about how to classify case material. The lead team member randomly reviewed approximately 10% of each coder's cases to increase consistency in coding decisions. The lead team member also reviewed cases in which other team members requested a second review. If there were questions about medically related referral information, the pediatrician was consulted. After all data were coded, cases in which incomplete data were coded were flagged and researchers went to the original forms to reconcile missing data.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- These 1,811 screened-out referrals involved 2,389 children. Approximately one-third of the screened out-referrals identified concerns about children who were age 6 or under. Forty-one percent of referrals identified concerns about children ages 7-13 and the remaining children were either over age 13 (23.4%) or information about the age of children was missing from the referral (4.8%).
- The largest number of screened out referrals originated from school personnel (27.9%) followed by a parent or parent substitute (14.4%).
- It was possible to classify the type(s) of suspected maltreatment in 92% of the referrals. The largest block of screened-out referrals identified suspected neglect (37.9%) followed by suspected physical abuse (34.3%).
- To assess the basis for screened out referrals, coders classified referral information related to five categories of appropriate referrals specified in Maryland policy (DHR, 1996). The majority of referrals alleging physical abuse did not include accounts of circumstances that would match any of these five categories (59.7%).
- In 45% of the 222 referrals classified as suspected child sexual abuse, coders were unable to match the circumstances to categories of appropriate referral circumstances specified in Maryland policy (DHR, 1996). In approximately 36% of the screened out-referrals, referral information suggested that a caretaker or family member touched a child.
- In 53% of the 686 referrals classified as suspected child neglect, coders were unable to match the circumstances to categories of appropriate referral circumstances specified in Maryland policy (DHR, 1996).
- In 82% of the 61 referrals classified as suspected mental injury, coders classified the suspected type as abuse and in 18% the type was coded as neglect.
- The proportion of referrals screened out significantly differed between jurisdictions ranging from 62.5% to 5.6%. Larger jurisdictions tended to screen out fewer referrals (29.8% in Baltimore City; 25.7% in Prince George's County) than the state average (36%).
- Fifteen percent of the screened out referrals were referred to another DSS service and 10% were referred to a community agency.

- Reasons for screening decisions varied across cases with the most frequent reason being “no injury alleged” (13.4%).
- Coders agreed with the screening decision 83% of the time. The most frequent reason for disagreeing with the screening decision was because the documentation was insufficient to suggest that this was an inappropriate referral. Other reasons were that coders believed that the allegations could indicate abuse or neglect or that the child could be vulnerable due to the circumstances described in the referral. In less than ten of the cases, concerns were serious enough for DHR to ask the local jurisdiction questions about the referral.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study was undertaken to explore the degree to which screening decisions were consistent with guidance provided in DHR state policies (1996). Findings from the study indicate that most of the time (82%), documentation suggests that the correct decisions were made.

- o However, given the significant differences in the percentage of referrals screened out between jurisdictions in Maryland, DHR may want to provide technical assistance and/or training in some jurisdictions, particularly related to situations that should be accepted for investigation.
- o Furthermore, because some of the reasons for disagreeing with screening decisions were due to incomplete documentation by the screening worker, DHR may want to provide guidance to local jurisdictions about the expectations for documenting decisions. In a couple of jurisdictions, workers actually coded the screening information using categories in state policy. This practice provides important accountability to the agency and should possibly be recommended in other jurisdictions.
- o Future studies should explore whether screening practices change over time, particularly as workloads increase because of the hiring freezes in Maryland. As has been documented nationally, when agencies have fewer resources to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect, the percentage of referrals screened out from investigations often increases.

## **CITIZENS' REVIEW BOARD FOR CHILDREN'S CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES**

Family Law 5-539.2 outlines the role and responsibilities of the State Board regarding the citizen review process for child protection. Between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002, Citizens' Review Board for Children (CRBC) experienced significant growth in its citizen review activities for child protection.

### **CRBC'S CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES DURING CALENDAR YEAR 2002**

| <b>State Board Responsibilities and Policies</b>  | <b>Child Protection Activities Between January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2002</b>   |
|---|--|
| Local governments are given discretionary authority to appoint local citizen review panels to monitor child protection operations under guidelines established by the State Board (Family Law 5-539.2). The State Board may designate these local citizen review panels to conduct case reviews and report results to the State Board (Family Law 5-539.1(b)(2)(ii)). | <b>As of December 31, 2002, every jurisdiction had appointed a Local Citizen Review Panel, and the State Board had designated these panels to conduct review on behalf of the State Board and State Council.</b>                                   |
| The State Board must provide training for the citizen review panels (Family Law 5-538(b)(1). A three-day training program enables panel members to become certified as case reviewers.  | <b>75 additional panel members were certified as case reviewers. Participants represented 23 jurisdictions (Howard County did not have participants). Effective December 31, 2002, there were 141 citizen volunteers serving as panel members.</b> |
| A Case Review Committee is comprised of three panel members who have completed the 18-hour case review training and is certified to complete case reviews.  | <b>9 jurisdictions established a Case Review Committee during 2002. Statewide, 19 jurisdictions have Case Review Committees.</b>   |
| The State Board is directed to conduct case reviews and may delegate that responsibility to local panels.   | <b>14 Case Review committees completed 38 case reviews. Since October 2001 (when the first review was completed), seventeen Case Review Committees have each completed at least one case review or are scheduled to hold a review.</b>             |
| Jurisdictions were requested to complete annual reports and submit by February 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2003.   | <b>9 jurisdictions have submitted annual reports.</b>  |

**SUMMARY OF CRBC'S CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES AT THE JURISDICTIONAL LEVEL**

| Jurisdiction     | Annual Report Completed | Local Case Review Activities  |   |   |  |  |
|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
|                  |                         | # of Certified Case Reviewers | Date When Case Review Committee was Established | Case Reviews Completed from 10/01 – 12/01 | Case Reviews Completed from 01/02– 12/02 | Case Reviews Scheduled for 1/03 – 6/03 |
|                  |                         |                               |   |   |  |  |
| Allegany         | Y                       | 11                            | 10/31/01  | 0   | 3  | 0                                      |
| Anne Arundel     | Y                       | 3                             | 01/23/02  | 0   | 0  | 3                                      |
| Baltimore County | N                       | 7                             | 7/25/02   | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| Calvert          | N                       | 3                             | 7/24/02   | 0   | 1  | 0                                      |
| Caroline         | N                       | 2                             | Not established                                 | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| Carroll          | N                       | 0                             | Not established                                 | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| Cecil            | N                       | 5                             | 10/16/01  | 0   | 0  | 2                                      |
| Charles          | Y                       | 4                             | 7/24/02   | 0   | 1  | 1                                      |
| Dorchester       | N                       | 4                             | 5/7/01  | 0   | 2  | 0                                      |
| Frederick        | N                       | 3                             | 9/12/01   | 0   | 1  | 0                                      |
| Garrett          | N                       | 8                             | 9/12/01   | 2   | 3  | 0                                      |
| Harford          | Y                       | 9                             | 7/19/01   | 2   | 3  | 2                                      |
| Howard           | N                       | 2                             | Not established                                 | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| Kent             | N                       | 1                             | Not established                                 | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| Montgomery       | Y                       | 1                             | Not established                                 | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| Prince George's  | Y                       | 14                            | 10/16/01  | 1   | 5  | 4                                      |
| Queen Anne's     | N                       | 3                             | 8/28/02   | 0   | 0  | 0                                      |
| St. Mary's       | N                       | 5                             | 7/24/02   | 0   | 0  | 1                                      |
| Somerset         | Y                       | 11                            | 8/8/01  | 1   | 3  | 0                                      |
| Talbot           | Y                       | 5                             | 5/13/02   | 0   | 2  | 0                                      |
| Washington       | Y                       | 5                             | 9/23/02   | 0   | 1  | 1                                      |
| Wicomico         | N                       | 9                             | 8/8/01  | 2   | 5  | 4                                      |
| Worcester        | N                       | 10                            | 8/28/02   | 0   | 1  | 1                                      |
| Baltimore City   | N                       | 16                            | 5/7/01  | 2   | 7  | 2                                      |
| Total            | 9                       | 141                           |   | 10  | 38                                       | 21                                     |

In addition to the 141 panel members certified to conduct reviews, four State Council members and two State Board members have been certified. Thirty-two State and local panel members have started the 3-day case review training but have not yet completed the process.

## THE CASE REVIEW PROCESS

### **SELECTION AND REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR CHILD PROTECTION CASE REVIEW**

CRBC randomly selects investigations that led to a finding of indicated. Children under age 1 and neglect cases are purposely over-represented in the sample. St. Mary's County did not have sufficient cases with the aforementioned criteria to draw a sample. Their reviews are randomly drawn from all indicated cases.

The State Board requests all prior and subsequent child welfare cases related to the randomly selected case for case review committee members assess system effectiveness.

The Case Review Committees evaluate five functions of child protection systems:

- ◆ Reporting child abuse and neglect;
- ◆ Receiving and screening child abuse and neglect allegations;
- ◆ Investigating and assessing child abuse and neglect allegations;
- ◆ Responding to child abuse and neglect; and
- ◆ Supervision and Administration.

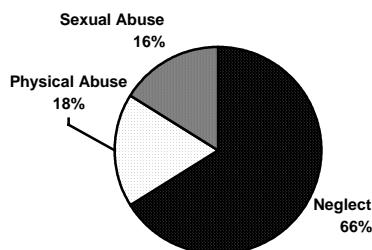
Responses are recorded on the Case Review Evaluation Form.

- ◆ For any given child protection function, an agency is considered to have performed effectively if it has taken necessary measures to satisfy the criteria listed on the evaluation form and any other necessary measures to protect children,
- ◆ The reviewers may decide which criteria under each function are applicable in a given case. The majority vote is checked for each case function.
- ◆ The Rationale/Recommendation section can provide additional information on why a function was considered effective or ineffective and/or comment on system strengths.

### **SUMMARY OF CASE REVIEW FINDINGS**

Sixty-six (66%) percent of the 38 cases reviewed during calendar year 2002 were for neglect.

**TYPE OF INDICATED CASES REVIEWED DURING CALENDAR YEAR 2002**



A summary of the findings from reviews is presented below. When considering the findings, please note that:

- ◆ Changes in the percentage of votes for effectiveness between 2001 and 2002 may be a result of:
  - case review committees becoming more experienced in the review process;

- different jurisdictions participating in the review process and not necessarily changes in the child protection system; and
- the types of cases that were randomly selected.
- ◆ 38 reviews should not be generalized as an evaluation of the child protection system;
- ◆ Case Review Committees' findings are based on documentation in the child protection files. Review of other files such as police records or interviews with interested persons may have resulted in different findings; and
- ◆ This report focuses on votes of the majority of the reviewers and general findings from the Case Review Committees and does not include case-specific findings.
- ◆ Case Review Committees may not have considered a specific function or criteria, thus the total for every sub-category may not equal 38.

**FINDINGS FOR CASE REVIEWS CONDUCTED BETWEEN OCTOBER 2001 – DECEMBER 2001 AND JANUARY 2002 – DECEMBER 2002**

In evaluating the **reporting function**, panels consider how well agencies, professionals, and other citizens fulfilled their mandated reporting responsibilities or how well agencies have promoted community awareness of child abuse and neglect laws. We recognize that reviewing investigations gives a limited view of the overall effectiveness with which professionals and community members fulfill their reporting responsibilities. (N=38).

| <b>Criteria To Assess Reporting Function</b>  | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>          | <b>Not Applicable</b> | <b>UNKNOWN</b> |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Reports were timely   | 32                  | 5                  | 1                     | 0              |
| Reporter(s) provided sufficient information to initiate an investigation & to locate child(ren)           | 36                  | 1                  | 0                     | 0              |
| Reporters received CAN training   | 10                  | 0                  | 11                    | 17             |
| Mandated reporters' 180 written report was in the report  | 16                  | 11                 | 9                     | 0              |
| Written report 180 provided sufficient information to initiate an investigation and locate the child(ren) | 17                  | 3                  | 16                    | 1              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>  | <b>32<br/>(84%)</b> | <b>6<br/>(16%)</b> | <b>0</b>              | <b>0</b>       |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>  | <b>9<br/>(90%)</b>  | <b>1<br/>(10%)</b> | <b>0</b>              | <b>0</b>       |

Evaluation of the **receiving/screening function** focuses on determining whether reporting is accessible to agencies and the public and whether appropriate information is assembled and considered to determine whether and when an investigation should begin. (N=38)



| <b>Criteria to Assess Receiving/Screening Function</b>                           | <b>Yes</b>           | <b>No</b>          | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Unknown</b> |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|
| Agency was accessible  | 36                   | 1                  | 0          | 0              |
| Sufficient information to initiate an investigation and locate child             | 35                   | 2                  | 0          | 0              |
| All individuals listed on reports were screened for prior history                | 16                   | 19                 | 2          | 0              |
| Prior history of maltreatment was considered                                     | 24                   | 11                 | 2          | 1              |
| Rationale for screening report in or out was consistent with law and regulations | 35                   | 3                  | 0          | 0              |
| All maltreatment issues were accepted for investigations                         | 29                   | 7                  | 1          | 0              |
| Timeliness of the agency response was consistent with nature of the report       | 34                   | 4                  | 0          | 0              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>                           | <b>33<br/>(87%)</b>  | <b>5<br/>(13%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>                           | <b>10<br/>(100%)</b> | <b>0</b>           | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |

Four categories are assessed under the **investigation/assessment function**: information-gathering, safety assessment, risk assessment, and findings.

Evaluation of the **information-gathering function** includes assessing whether appropriate actions were taken regarding contacting and questioning individuals and agencies, reviewing prior history, and assembling documents. (N=37)

| <b>Criteria to Assess Information Gathering Function</b>   | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>           | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Unknown</b> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| Initiation of investigation consistent with nature of allegations  | 34                  | 4                   | 0          | 0              |
| Investigators made reasonable efforts to interview all parties   | 28                  | 10                  | 0          | 0              |
| DSS/police coordinated and shared information  | 16                  | 9                   | 13         | 0              |
| Appropriate information with other agencies (e.g. medical, childcare, out-of-home placement)             | 20                  | 12                  | 5          | 0              |
| Resources available to assess maltreatment (e.g., trained medical specialist, psychologist)              | 23                  | 12                  | 2          | 0              |
| Children and family's confidentiality maintained   | 25                  | 4                   | 7          | 1              |
| Cultural, religious, ethnic factors considered (e.g., training, interpreters, and non-English materials) | 5                   | 3                   | 24         | 5              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>   | <b>26<br/>(70%)</b> | <b>11<br/>(30%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>   | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |

Evaluation of the **safety assessment function** includes assessing whether procedures were followed for determining whether a child is safe in the immediate future. It must be completed whenever circumstances change sufficiently to create significant new possibility of imminent maltreatment. (N=38)

| <b>Criteria to Assess Safety Assessment Function</b>                 | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>           | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Unknown</b> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| Safety of all children in the care of alleged maltreater assessed    | 27                  | 9                   | 1          | 1              |
| All maltreatment issues addressed                                    | 22                  | 14                  | 0          | 1              |
| Prior maltreatment issues considered                                 | 16                  | 12                  | 9          | 1              |
| Safety assessment/plan adequately addressed known threats            | 20                  | 14                  | 4          | 0              |
| If appropriate, family was monitored for compliance with safety plan | 14                  | 7                   | 14         | 2              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>               | <b>24<br/>(63%)</b> | <b>14<br/>(37%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>               | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |

Evaluation of the **risk assessment function** focuses on whether appropriate protocols were used to estimate possible harm to the child in the future due to exposure to various risk factors. (N=38)

| <b>Criteria to Assess the Risk Assessment Function</b>   | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>           | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Unknown</b> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| Parental willingness/ ability to protect the child and level of cooperation considered when assessing risk | 28                  | 10                  | 0          | 0              |
| Investigator assessed for presence of domestic violence and substance abuse                                | 21                  | 15                  | 1          | 1              |
| Prior maltreatment history considered in assessing risk  | 23                  | 8                   | 7          | 0              |
| Risk assessment assessed potential future maltreatment   | 30                  | 8                   | 0          | 0              |
| Cultural, religious, ethnic factors considered   | 1                   | 0                   | 5          | 3              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>   | <b>28<br/>(74%)</b> | <b>10<br/>(26%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>   | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |

Evaluation of the **findings function** includes determining whether maltreatment occurred as described in the reported allegations. (N=37)

| <b>Criteria to Assess the Finding Function</b>                             | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>          | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Unknown</b> |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|
| The rationale for the disposition was consistent with Family Law and COMAR | 36                  | 2                  | 0          | 0              |
| Investigations were completed in a timely fashion                          | 28                  | 8                  | 0          | 0              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness</b>                                 | <b>33<br/>(89%)</b> | <b>4<br/>(11%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>                     | <b>7<br/>(70%)</b>  | <b>3<br/>(30%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>       |

Evaluation of the **supervision/administration function** includes assessing whether agencies have sufficient resources and whether they are organized and managed appropriately to control an effective child protection process. (N=37)

| <b>Criteria to Assess Supervision/Administration Function</b>   | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>           | <b>N/A</b> | <b>Unknown</b>     |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Organizational resources (e.g., staff, space, equipment, etc.) adequately supported the various functions across agencies | 28                  | 3                   | 1          | 4                  |
| Documentation was concise, useful, organized, and relevant  | 28                  | 8                   | 0          | 0                  |
| Supervision was utilized throughout the entire process  | 24                  | 5                   | 0          | 8                  |
| Investigators' caseload were consistent with CWLA or other applicable standards   | 7                   | 23                  | 1          | 3                  |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness</b>  | <b>23<br/>(62%)</b> | <b>13<br/>(35%)</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>1<br/>(3%)</b>  |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>  | <b>3<br/>(30%)</b>  | <b>6<br/>(60%)</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>1<br/>(10%)</b> |

There are nine areas to assess in the **response function**: service planning, staffing, out-of-home placement, appeal process, CINA/CINS, protective order, custody process, and criminal process.

Evaluation of the **service planning function** includes determining whether service planning employed best practices, addressed the factors identified in assessments, and whether agencies worked well together. (N=38)

| <b>Criteria to Assess Service Planning Function</b>  | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>           | <b>N/A</b>         | <b>Unknown</b>    |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Case closed only after maltreatment was addressed  | 15                  | 12                  | 11                 | 0                 |
| Service plans were based on needs identified in assessments  | 18                  | 11                  | 9                  | 0                 |
| Family was involved in service development   | 19                  | 8                   | 11                 | 0                 |
| Timely services/resources available  | 23                  | 5                   | 4                  | 2                 |
| Timely services were offered to address child safety, prevent maltreatment re-occurrence, and promote family unity | 17                  | 18                  | 3                  | 0                 |
| Services were coordinated with all providers   | 20                  | 9                   | 9                  | 0                 |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>   | <b>20<br/>(53%)</b> | <b>15<br/>(39%)</b> | <b>3<br/>(8%)</b>  | <b>0</b>          |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>   | <b>2<br/>(20%)</b>  | <b>5<br/>(50%)</b>  | <b>2<br/>(20%)</b> | <b>1<br/>(10)</b> |

Evaluation of the **staffing function** examines whether intra-agency written and oral communication was used, as needed, among team members and at key transition points in the service process. This ensures that multiple perspectives are included in decision-making, information is not lost, and families are not subject to contradictory statements or directives from different agency personnel.

| <b>Criteria to Assess Staffing Function</b>   | <b>Yes</b>          | <b>No</b>          | <b>N/A</b>          | <b>Unknown</b> |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Staffing was utilized to determine safety assessment, risk assessment, and findings | 16                  | 7                  | 15                  |                |
| Staffing was utilized for service planning and coordination.                        | 17                  | 8                  | 15                  |                |
| Staffing was documented in case record.   | 15                  | 7                  | 14                  | 1              |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>                              | <b>15<br/>(41%)</b> | <b>6<br/>(16%)</b> | <b>16<br/>(43%)</b> |                |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>                              | <b>4<br/>(40%)</b>  | <b>2<br/>(20%)</b> | <b>4<br/>(40%)</b>  | <b>0</b>       |

Evaluation of the **Response Function** involves 7 categories. In 3 categories (Multi-Disciplinary Teams, Placement Function, and CINA/CINS Function) the committees found that the function was applicable to at least 38% of the reviews (total of yes and no responses)

**Multi-disciplinary team function** includes whether inter-agency and interdisciplinary communication is used at key decision points so that multiple perspectives are included in decision-making, information is not lost, and families are not subject to contradictory statements or directives from different agencies. (N=37)

| Criteria to Assess Multi-disciplinary Function             | Yes                | No                 | N/A                 | Unknown           |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Teaming was utilized to determine safety, risk, findings   | 8                  | 8                  | 21                  | 0                 |
| Teaming was utilized for service planning and coordination | 9                  | 7                  | 0                   | 1                 |
| Teaming provided useful case coordination                  | 6                  | 9                  | 21                  | 0                 |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b>     | <b>7<br/>(19%)</b> | <b>7<br/>(19%)</b> | <b>22<br/>(59%)</b> | <b>1<br/>(3%)</b> |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b>     | <b>0</b>           | <b>0</b>           | <b>0<br/>(10%)</b>  | <b>0</b>          |

**Placement function** includes whether children were removed from their families when and only when necessary for their protection and whether the placement process properly protects their safety, promotes permanency and continuity of relationships, and advances child well being. Fourteen children were removed from home for their protection. (N=36)

| Criteria to Assess Placement Function                  | Yes                 | No                 | N/A                 | Unknown  |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Immediate removal for imminent risk of harm            | 14                  | 5                  | 19                  | 0        |
| Relatives sought for placement                         | 14                  | 4                  | 19                  | 1        |
| CIS/Criminal clearance in the record                   | 1                   | 10                 | 24                  | 0        |
| Stabilization services provided                        | 10                  | 4                  | 24                  | 0        |
| Siblings placed together                               | 9                   | 3                  | 26                  | 0        |
| Siblings assigned to same caseworker                   | 10                  | 3                  | 25                  | 0        |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b> | <b>14<br/>(39%)</b> | <b>5<br/>(14%)</b> | <b>17<br/>(47%)</b> | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b> | <b>1<br/>(10%)</b>  | <b>0</b>           | <b>8<br/>(80%)</b>  | <b>0</b> |

CINA/CINS function includes whether court protection for children is sought when appropriate, whether the court process operates as intended, and whether it protects children. (N=38)

| Criteria to Assess CINA/CINS Function                  | Yes                 | No                 | N/A                 | Unknown  |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Petition filed   | 13                  | 2                  | 22                  | 0        |
| Court actions timely                                   | 10                  | 3                  | 25                  | 0        |
| Appropriate court representation                       | 11                  | 2                  | 24                  | 1        |
| Court orders/decisions in child's best interest        | 11                  | 2                  | 24                  | 0        |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2002</b> | <b>11<br/>(29%)</b> | <b>3<br/>(8%)</b>  | <b>24<br/>(63%)</b> | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Evaluation of overall effectiveness during 2001</b> | <b>2<br/>(20%)</b>  | <b>1<br/>(10%)</b> | <b>7<br/>(70%)</b>  | <b>0</b> |

For the remaining four categories under the Response Function, the Case Review Committees found that the function was not applicable in at least 86% of the reviews.

- ◆ **Appeals process** includes whether the appeal process operates as intended and produces decisions that are consistent with CINA decisions of the court. **This was found not applicable in 89% of the reviews.**
- ◆ **Protective order function** includes whether the protective order process is used to protect children and whether it operates in a manner to minimize disruption to the family. **This was found not applicable in 92% of the reviews.**
- ◆ The **child custody function** includes whether the custody order process is used to protect children and whether it operates in manner to minimize disruption to the family. **This was found not applicable in 87% of the reviews.**
- ◆ **Criminal process function** includes whether the criminal process is used to protect the community and whether it functions as intended and in a manner to minimize disruption to the family. **This was found not applicable in 76% of the reviews and was unknown in 5% of the reviews.**

#### **SUMMARY OF CASE REVIEWS HELD DURING 2002**

The Recommendation/Rationale sections of the Case Review Evaluation Forms provide additional information on strengths and development needs for each of the function areas. There were 296 comments for the 38 cases reviewed. The comments provide clarification on the effectiveness of the criteria.

#### **General Comments**

- For both 2001 and 2002 reviews, the committees did not have a finding of N/A for measures of effectiveness within the first four functions (reporting, receiving, investigation/assessment (including information gathering, safety assessment, risk assessment, findings) and supervision/administrative). These functions were considered germane to the child protection investigation process regardless of the type of maltreatment or local child welfare practice.
- The Case Review Committees' findings and recommendations strongly support the principle that protecting children is a community-wide effort and is not just the responsibility of the local departments of social services. This includes parents, citizens, schools, medical community, and law enforcement.
- Effective child welfare practices require child welfare practitioners to have structured collaboration and formal accountability standards for reporting, investigating, and documenting child protection activities and for services to protect children and support families.

#### **Documentation**

Comments in the Recommendation/Rational section and the votes of reviewers highlight the importance the reviewers placed on documentation. In 10 of the reviews, the Local Citizen Review Panels commented on strengths of the documentation for at least one of the functions.

Areas in which improvements were needed in the child protection activity and/or documentation of the activity included:

- supervisory oversight;
- follow-up or continued service intervention;
- training for schools regarding reporting and documenting;
- addressing the specific type of maltreatment in the service plan.

### **Timeliness of Child Protection Activities**

There are 11 references to timeliness within the 7 functions. When reviewing the responses where the measurement was found applicable (yes or no response), the range of effectiveness was from 49% to 100%. The reviewers' votes and comments support that activities completed during the reporting, receiving, and findings function are essentially timely. The criterion with the lowest percentage of effectiveness was under the Service Planning Function.

“Timely services were offered to address child safety, prevent maltreatment re-occurrence, and promote family unity” was found applicable in 35 out of 38 reviews with 49% considered effective. This may be related to the insufficient availability of services.

### **Safety and Risk Assessments**

There were 17 references to safety and risk assessments within the 7 functions. Most of the comments referred to the lack of consistently screening all members of the household or people who may have been involved in the allegations. This corresponds to the panels' votes that found that in 54% of the applicable cases (reviews with yes or no responses), all individuals listed in the reports were not screened for prior history. Some groups of people who were not always screened included biological father, grandparents, and other children in household.

Other comments focused on enhancing and/or implementing established safety protocols.

- Childcare workers and DSS staff need clear policy and training related to abuse in facilities by other foster children.
  - Distinction between sexual abuse and sexual assault; and
  - The responsibility and liability of the facility with regard to supervision of residents.
- Safety plans were not always in the case folder. For cases with a safety plan, there was not always consistent follow-up. Of the 38 cases reviewed, 34 (89%) were voted applicable for consideration of the measurement “Safety assessment/plan adequately addressed known threats.” The panels found this measurement effective in 59% of the applicable case.
- Some aspects of established procedures for assessing risk and safety are not consistently implemented, including failure to complete home visits, face-to-face contacts with all children who were in care of maltreater, and assessments for domestic violence and substance abuse.

### **Case Management**

- ◆ In 34 case reviews, the criterion “investigators’ caseload was consistent with CWLA or other applicable standards” (under the Supervision/Administration Function) was found applicable in 30 out of 34 case reviews. Seven of the 30 applicable cases (23%) were found to be within standards.
- ◆ Training is needed on:
  - Working with different cultures and age groups especially juveniles; and
  - Assessing substance abuse and domestic violence.

### **Community Resources**

- ◆ Approximately one-third of comments in Rationale/Recommendations focus on an agency other than the department of social services. The lack of resources greatly hinders the ability to investigate as well as provide services to children and their families. Some needed resources referenced in the comments include medical and psychological services, substance abuse treatment, short-term and long-term housing, and case management services. Availability, accessibility, and timeliness of services were considered critical to the child protection process.
- ◆ The use of a Multi-Disciplinary Team was considered applicable in 16 (43%) of the 37 votes for the criterion “Teaming was utilized to determine safety, risk, and coordination.” Of the 16 votes for applicability, the panels found the measurement effective in 50% of the reviews. There were seven comments indicating that a Multi-Disciplinary Team should have been involved.

## **SUMMARIES OF LOCAL ANNUAL REPORTS**

Nine jurisdictions provided a summary of their activities during calendar year 2002.

### **Allegany County**

Panel met quarterly. Panel meetings were posted at the County Office Building. The panel also conducted confidentiality training on March 1, 2002 for new members.

### **Anne Arundel County**

Held three meetings in 2002. Met their goal to established review committee and scheduled their first review to be conducted in 2003. Panel lost several members in 2002 and will be focused on recruitment in 2003.

### **Charles County**

Held three quarterly meetings in 2002. Panel heard presentations from Department of Social services and Sheriff’s Office. Met their goals to establish a review committee, conduct first review, and complete their Local System Description Project in December 2002.

### **Harford County**

Panel meetings were held monthly on the third Tuesday of the month. They begin each meeting with a presentation from a child protection stakeholder. In 2002 they heard presentations by the Department of Social Services, Public School System, Citizens review Board for Children, six presenters from state/local law enforcement, Child Advocacy Center and Spouse Assault Resource Center (SARC).

### **Montgomery County**

Panel meets monthly and conducted the following activities:

- ◆ Compiled data from 90 questionnaires from professionals who report maltreatment;
- ◆ Conducted a focus group of professionals who report maltreatment;
- ◆ Testified before the county executive;
- ◆ Successfully advocated for establishment of a Director of Children's Mental Health;
- ◆ Advocated for a resource data base of children's services.

### **Prince George's County**

Panel meets monthly. The panel worked on five issues:

- ◆ The Juvenile Policy Advisory Team
- ◆ Caseload Reduction for Prince George's County Department of Social Services Staff
- ◆ Case Reviews
- ◆ Drug Treatment Programs for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice
- ◆ Development of Supervision Neglect Brochure

Their work included meetings with local and state government officials and staff. They met with three state delegates and Senator Miller. They also held presentations by local agency personnel addressing their focal issues. Their goal for 2003 is to find a sponsor to deliver their supervision neglect brochure to all Maryland households and advocate for additional personnel to Prince George's Social Services.

### **Somerset County**

Panel meets quarterly. They have held presentations at each meeting. Presenters from Family Court services, Infant and Toddlers, Mental Health and Juvenile Justice shared their roles in the child welfare system. The panel sent a letter to Governor Ehrlich requesting the lifting of the State's hiring freeze on child welfare staff and encouraged local child welfare stakeholders to also advocate.

Somerset's LCRP noted several systemic strengths in their jurisdiction regarding cross-training opportunities for child welfare agency staff. Most impressive was a quality assurance survey of panel activities/processes.

### **Talbot County**

Panel meets quarterly. They met their goal to recruit members who could attend training and begin conducting reviews. They have been involved with the planning of a Child Advocacy Center in Talbot County that may include telemedicine services for the entire eastern shore.

### **Washington County**

Panel meets quarterly. The panel has been focused on attending training and conducting case reviews.



## **PROJECTED CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2003**

### **Extend Review Activities to Include Out-of-Home Placement Reviews**

In May 2002, the Department of Legislative Services published a report of an audit for out-of-home placement. The audit was conducted through a random sample of record reviews of 162 out-of-home placement cases, and a survey of caseworkers, foster care providers, judges, and citizen review board members.

The audit listed several areas in which the out-of-home placement system was performing satisfactorily including that reports of abuse or neglect while children are in care are generally handled in accord with regulations.

The audit also found alarming indications that vulnerable children were not receiving the consistent monitoring and intervention necessary to guarantee safety and a basic standard of care. For example, the audit found that half of the children were living with adults for whom no criminal history records check could be found.

In response to the critical issues raised in the DLS audit, the State Board, in partnership with the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, and in consultation with the Social Services Administration, the local departments of social services, the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (which represents many of the private child placement agencies), and the Maryland League of Foster and Adoptive Parents, has expanded the role of the citizen review panels.

**The panels will review the records of the local board when reviewing a child protection investigation that subsequently involved placement and a citizen review. In this way, the citizen review process will be subject to the same type of oversight as the frontline child protection agencies.**

### **Expand the type of information available in the panel reviews**

#### In-depth Case Reviews with Interested Parties

In-depth case reviews consist of face-to-face interviews with investigators, reporters, family members, and other professionals involved with the family and child. In-depth case reviews provide much more information than what is recorded in the record and may improve insight into areas where the system has effectively worked together to reduce the risk of child maltreatment and / or to where the system could be improved. Panel members will not interview children because the focus is on the child and family in the system, not the case being reviewed. Additional staff and other resources may be needed before this expansion can be implemented.

#### Review Law Enforcement Records

Discussions are being held between SCCAN's Children's Justice Act Committee and law enforcement to establish protocols for how reviews of law enforcement records will be added to the case review process.

### **Integrate child protection and out-of-home placement citizen oversight**

Child protection and out-of-home placement services have many similar issues and concerns such as high caseloads for case workers, ensuring safety for children, need for expanded resources, and an expectation that the two services will provide a coordinated continuum of services. CRBC will focus on integrating panel and board member activities in system advocacy, training, and staff support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Strengthen child abuse and neglect laws and policies

- ✓ The General Assembly should enact the following bills:
  - o Institute a misdemeanor penalty for health professionals, educators, law enforcement personnel, and human services workers who knowingly and willfully fail to report abuse or neglect. Forty-five states have such a penalty; and
  - o Limit the overly-broad clergy exemption in the present reporting statute.
- ✓ The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene should find creative ways to train physicians in diagnosing abuse and neglect, provide a telemedicine network for more efficient consultation, and reimburse physicians for time spent on forensic work and testimony related to child maltreatment.

### 2. Improve accountability regarding safety of children during the reporting, investigation, and service delivery of the child protection process.

- ✓ The Department of Human Resources should define new standards for:
  - o What constitutes a thorough investigation of child abuse and neglect allegations, particularly in sexual abuse cases, and
  - o Protection of children who are found to have been abused or neglected.

### 3. Fully implement the Integration of Child Welfare and Substance Abuse Treatment Services (HB7/SB671).

In Baltimore City, child advocates, the business, government, the religious community, and the philanthropic community have joined forces to raise private funding to increase drug treatment services for parents of young children. The goal of \$6 million for two years is intended to provide a stopgap while State budget revenues are low.

Recommendations to achieve the intended results of the law include:

- ✓ DHR and DHMH should disseminate a written protocol for caseworkers and addiction specialists;
- ✓ The Governor should re-instate funds to provide full funding of HB 7/SB 671 in the FY 2006 budget;
- ✓ DHR should develop a systematic state-wide data collection system to measure activities such as the number of cases screened for substance abuse or the number of parents refusing referral to the addiction specialist;
- ✓ DHMH should integrate child-welfare-related data in substance abuse effectiveness measures;
- ✓ The General Assembly should remove the requirement to have the parent consent to a referral to the addiction specialist, which undermines the rationale for placing addiction specialists in child welfare offices; and

4. **Continue to implement the Child Welfare Workforce Act of 1998 in order to enhance casework quality, reduce staff turnover, and protect children.**
5. **Develop quality assurance methods for child welfare services that incorporate long-term outcome measures**
  - ✓ The Department of Human Resources should enhance its accountability system. A special effort should be made to measure long-term impact on permanency, safety and child well-being following completion of services to children and their families and to include client and stakeholder feedback among the information used to assess system performance.
  - ✓ The budget committees of the General Assembly have asked the Department of Budget and Management to convene a task force to follow up on these recommendations and to issue a final report by December 2004.
  - ✓ The Secretaries of Budget and Management and Human Resources should work together to implement the task force and should include representatives of the child protection panels and other child advocates on the task force.